

OBITUARY



Alan Stone
1904-1999

Alan Stone, eminent dipterist, died on March 4, 1999 at the age of 95. He was a lifelong member and generous benefactor of the Entomological Society of Washington, and was one of its Honorary Members. He served the Society as Editor from 1944 to 1947, as President in 1951, and was a regular attendee at meetings and the annual banquet. He was a lifelong member also of the Entomological Society of America.

Alan was born in Brooklyn, New York, on January 23, 1904. He graduated from Cornell University in 1926 and earned his doctorate there in 1929 with a thesis on North American Tabanidae. On August 25, 1928, he and Louise Beaujon were married. He taught one year at Dartmouth University and then on October 21, 1931 began his forty-year long employment as a biting fly specialist with what is now the Systematic Entomology Laboratory of the U.S. Department of Agriculture at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. He served as the supervisor of the Diptera Unit from its establishment in the 1930s until his retirement on December 31, 1971.

He authored or coauthored about 100 papers, chiefly on mosquitoes, blackflies, and horseflies. His most important contribution was his work on mosquitoes, especially during World War II and the Korean War when there were exceptionally heavy demands on him for identification of specimens from all parts of the world, particularly the Pacific Islands and Southeast Asia. He identified 7,000 to 9,000 samples during each of the WW II years, much of it new to science, and instructed approximately 200 Army, Navy, and Public Health Service officers in mosquito identification. Kenneth L. Knight, assigned for a year and a half as a Navy officer during the Second World War to study Pacific mosquitoes with Alan, remembers how calm and unruffled he was through the constant intrusions by visiting Armed Forces personnel, all the while keeping abreast of his regular duties without technical help. These busy years were the foundation for the innovative *Synoptic Catalog of the Mosquitoes of the World* by Stone, K. L. Knight, and H. Starcke published in 1959, the first catalog of the entire

family to appear in 37 years during which time names of mosquitoes had tripled in number. That catalog lives on, subsumed and updated in 1977 by *A Catalog of the Mosquitoes of the World* authored by Knight and Stone.

One of Alan's great accomplishments followed from a special project he was assigned just before the War, to revise the tephritid genus *Anastrepha*, an economically important group then receiving a lot of attention in Central America. No one else was available in the Laboratory then to cover plant-feeding flies, normally outside his USDA assignment. He responded with a fine revision of the genus that appeared in 1942, in which were described 104 species, including 52 new to science. That publication was authoritative and timely, and is still used today by fruit fly specialists.

His epitaph should probably be *A Catalog of the Diptera of America North of Mexico* published in 1965. It was in fact a team effort of the Diptera Unit, but he headed the program, there was no doubt. His correspondence with collaborators for that volume was immense and the care for the punchcard system that was used was a painstaking operation. The catalog, used now by some entomologists not even born when Alan retired, was the catalyst for all the regional Diptera catalogs that have followed.

Alan was a conscientious, meticulous worker, a prompt and excellent correspondent, equally responsive to each of the separate tasks of his job: research, curation, and service. The Diptera families within his responsibility were the best curated and cataloged. Alan had a habit of abstracting current taxonomic literature onto index cards at home in the evenings. His first task upon coming to work in the morning was to file the cards, the occasional second was to write other taxonomists notifying them of homonyms they had created. One of Alan's daily customs was to post outside his office door a New Yorker cartoon, a new one on top of the previous ones throughout the

week. On Monday he discarded them all and started a new series.

He was unpretentious, gentlemanly, cultivated, and well read, particularly on issues of the day and politics, and had a definite liberal inclination. He was good-humored and would chuckle over a good joke, but was generally laconic and had not much time for small talk. His phone conversations were polite but short and almost abrupt. He never took coffee breaks, had his lunch always in under 30 minutes in one of the government cafeterias nearby, and no one can remember him engaging in idle conversation.

He kept perhaps the neatest office at the Museum. On the day he retired, his desk was ready for a new occupant to sit down and begin work, completely clear except for a sheet of paper advising that the literature files and card files were in alphabetical order by family, genera, and species, and indicating where the various families that had been under his purview were located in the general collection. He had some manuscripts in press to proofread, but beyond that left no unfinished business. Alan chose not to continue taxonomic work after he retired, believing that no one was irreplaceable. He had many other interests, including philately until his extensive stamp collection as well as other prized possessions were stolen by a burglar, but retained a keen interest in entomology and entomologists. In 1980 his history of Nearctic dipterology prepared for the *Flies of the Nearctic Region* was published.

He and his wife Louise hosted many dipterist and other gatherings at their home. Louise was a gracious and socially astute hostess. They shared a large acquaintance among entomologists through her job in the office of the Entomological Society of America. Each year they bought four subscription theatre tickets and would serially treat dipterists and other friends and their wives to a play a year. Louise predeceased Alan in 1990. They are survived by their son Peter and daughter-in-law Marila of

Durham, North Carolina, and two granddaughters.

In recent years Alan wrote a limerick each day on his old manual typewriter. When friends visited or invited him somewhere, he would present them a sheet with 20 or so selections arranged in double column. The limericks allowed him to make pithy, humorous, or wry statements about important or homely events. He took some trouble over the titles so that they complemented the subjects perfectly. I have chosen four of them to publish here, the first of which gives me license to do so.

NO SALE

These limericks have no copyright
Use them and there will be no fight

They are offered for free
As they certainly should be.
It's not many that they would delight.

LITERARY

There once was a chap named Hawthorne
Who wrote what some thought was porn

Hester Prynne was the harlot
The letter was scarlet
Now young folks consider it corn.

TOO MANY

There was a man named Thomas Malthus
Who raised a very big fuss
About not enough food
For everyone's brood
But most thought he doesn't mean us.

NO ESCAPE

One who takes physical exercise
May somewhat postpone his demise
But the grim reaper comes
To good folks and bums
As everyone must realize.

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